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Wisconsin in the Civil War.

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Report of the "Commission for the purpose of devising a plan to provide for the preparation of the History of the Wisconsin Soldiers in the Civil War," acting under the provisions of Chapter 298, Laws of 1905

MADISON, WIS.
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REPORT OF THE "COMMISSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEVISING A PLAN TO PROVIDE FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE HISTORY OF WISCONSIN SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR," ACTING UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 298, LAWS OF 1905.

To the Honorable, the Legislature of Wisconsin:

The undersigned, members of the commission directed by chapter 298, Laws of 1905, to recommend to the legislature of 1907 "a plan for the preparation of the history of Wisconsin soldiers in the civil war," beg leave to report as follows:

The preamble to the legislative act calling the commission into existence reads:

"Whereas, The history of Wisconsin soldiers in the civil war is one of which every citizen of the state is justly proud; and

"Whereas, It is necessary to make some provision for recording [the] same while many of the actors therein are living."

This preamble sufficiently explains and justifies the end sought to be obtained, and makes further introductory unessential.

The general object of the commission being to suggest methods of reviving and emphasizing popular as well as permanent scholarly interest in Wisconsin's part in the civil war, four lines of work are deemed of importance to promote this result:

First, the reprinting of rare published materials, and publication of contemporary manuscripts.

Second, the stimulation of research and publication among the younger generation of students.

Third, the calling out of meritorious personal recollections, or company and regimental histories, by survivors of the war.

Fourth, as an outgrowth of the foregoing, provision for scholarly monographs and papers based upon the material secured

by the above methods, and still further by the collections already existing in the great library of the State Historical Society, held by that corporation in trust for the state, and in the official archives of the state.

I.

PUBLICATION OF RARE AND CONTEMPORARY MATERIAL

Following is a list of Wisconsin regimental histories of the civil war period, so far as known at the State Historical Library, which has a supposedly complete file—the very rare items being indicated by a *:

History of the Third Regiment of Wis. Vet. Vol. Infantry, 1861–65. By Edwin E. Bryant. 1891. 17+445p. 8°

History of the Services of the Third Battery, Wisconsin Light Artillery. Compiled by H. H. G. Bradt. [1902]. 104p. 18°

*History and Catalogue of the Fourth Regiment Wisconsin [Cavalry] Volunteers, 1861–1864. 71p. 8°

*The Army of the Potomac; Behind the Scenes. A diary of unwritten History. [5th Wis. Vols.] By Alfred L. Castleman, 1863. 288p. 12°

*Four Years in the Army of the Potomac [5th Wis. Vols.] By Maj. Jones [1882]. 246p. 8°

*History of the 6th Wisconsin Battery. By H. S. Keene. 1879. 65p. 12°

Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers. By Rufus R. Dawes. 1890. 330p. 8°

Echoes of the Civil War as I Hear Them. By Michael H. Fitch. [Record of service in the 6th and 21st Wis. Vols.] 368p. 12°

The Eagle Regiment, 8th Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers. By a "Non-Vet" of Co. "H" [J. M. Williams]. 1890. 166p. 8°

*Opening of the Mississippi; or, Two Years' Campaigning in the South-West, by a non-commissioned officer [George W. Driggs]. [8th Wis. Inf.]. 1864. 149p. 8°

Reminiscences of the War. By J. H. Greene, Capt. Co. F, 8th (Eagle) Wis. Reg. Inf. 1886. 87p. 8°

*History of the 11th Wis. Vet. Vol. Inf. Compiled and pub. by J. J. McMyler. 1865. 93p. 8°

Story of the Service of Co. E and of the Twelfth Wis. Vol. Reg. in the War of the Rebellion. Written by one of the boys [H. W. Rood]. 1893. 547p. 8°

From Youth to Age. Adventures in a Varied Life. By D. B. Lovejoy. [Including History of the 13th Wis. Vol. Inf.] 1894. 272p. 12°

*War Pictures. Experiences and Observations of a Chaplain in the U. S. Army. By Rev. J. B. Rogers, chaplain of the 14th Wis. Vols. 1863. 258p. 12°

Det Fentenmde Regiment Wisconsin Frivillige [15th Wis. Vols.]. O. A. Buslett. [1895]. 696p. 12°

Borgerkrigen i de Forende Stater. By J. A. Enander. [15th Wis. Reg.]. 1881. 128p. 12°

*Det Skandinaviske regiments historie [15th Wis. Reg.]. By J. A. Johnson. 1869. 161p. 12°

A Soldier of the Cumberland. Memoir of Mead Holmes Jr., Sergeant of Co. K, 21st Reg. Wis. Vols. By his father. [1864]. 240p. 16°

*The Star Corps; or, Notes of an Army Chaplain during Sherman's Famous "March to the Sea." Rev. G. S. Bradley, chaplain 22nd Wis. 1865. 304p. 12°

The Diary of a Private Soldier. The Exact Copy of a Record Kept Day by Day during the Civil War by Henry P. Whipple, late a private in the Twenty-ninth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Transcribed in 1906. Waterloo, Wis. [1906]. 80p. 8°

*A Diary of the Thirteenth Regiment Wis. Vols. A History of the Regiment since its Organization. 1864. 110p. 16°

The Thirty-sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, 1st Brigade 2nd Div. 2nd Army Corps. James M. Aubrey. [1900] 130p. 8°

The Sword and Gun; a History of the 37th Wis. Vol. Inf. By Maj. R. C. Eden. 1865. 120p. 16°

Battle Fields and Camp Fires of the 38th (Wis. Vols.) By Lieut. S. W. Pierce. 1866. 254p. 12°

Very much of this printed material concerning Wisconsin's part in the civil war is still unknown, beyond a limited circle of collectors. No doubt a reprinting of the rarest publications above listed would do much to stimulate interest among the old soldiers themselves, many of whom are not aware even of the existence of these works, and doubtless would lead to the preparation of histories of those regiments not already represented.

There is also in the State Historical Library a considerable mass of material in the form of contemporary newspaper clippings, all of it permanently mounted, and much of it admirably classified and indexed. The principal items of this character are: Ten large folio volumes, with a manuscript index to each volume, containing the contemporary correspondence (1861–65) of Wisconsin soldiers at the front, chiefly published in their

home papers, and arranged by regiments—this collection having been made while the war was in progress by E. B. Quiner for his *Military History of Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1866); several similar volumes of Wisconsin war clippings, collected by other persons, and not classified—one of these on the Iron Brigade; three folio volumes containing a supposedly complete collection of contemporary rosters of Wisconsin volunteers (1861–65), classified by the different arms of the service.

There is also in the library a large collection of newspaper articles of later years, chiefly reminiscences by participants, relative to Wisconsin men and their achievements in the war. In addition to all of these original sources, bearing specifically on Wisconsin's record, the library possesses one of the largest and best selected collections in the United States of the general literature of the war, including state and governmental publications, much of it containing at least incidental references to the services rendered by Wisconsin troops.

The library contains, as well, considerable manuscript material of service to Wisconsin historians of the war, such as enlistment rolls, copies of military orders, muster-rolls, reports, commissions, etc., and several narrations of specific events and of regiments. Without attempting a formal list, the following may be especially mentioned: two diaries and other material from Gov. C. C. Washburn; the papers of Brigade-Surgeon C. B. Chapman of Madison; letters and other documents obtained by Rev. D. Love while writing his *Wisconsin in the Rebellion* (Chicago, 1866); diaries of George Fairfield and others; six large volumes containing the records of persons liable for military duty in nearly all the counties of Wisconsin; and with these, papers dealing with the draft.

There is also a very considerable mass of important material in the official archives of the state, at the capitol, bearing upon the administrative side of Wisconsin's participation in the war. The correspondence of the governor's office during that period is filed and arranged for reference, much of it classified. There are, as well, valuable records in the vaults of the secretary of state, and in the care of the adjutant general—but many of the best documents formerly in the latter department, including enlistment papers, were destroyed by the fire of 1904.

In the foregoing collections of manuscript and printed sources, and official archives, there is much that might, with judicious se-

lection and editing, now be published and reprinted. In the present undertaking, such publications would seem to be highly desirable, from the interest they would arouse, and the information they would bring to light. Especially would the personal contemporary acounts written to home papers from camps at the front, while the war was still in progress and the impressions of the writers were vivid, be extremely valuable in bringing to the younger generation of the state some realization of the campaigns and battles of the war. A series of such reprints should be of great service as well to the cause of historical study.

While the selection of material for such proposed publications may properly rest in some special board or commission like the present, the editing and proof-reading thereof might well be left to the care of the State Historical Society, which is not only amply qualified for such service but would be glad, if given necessary legislative warrant, to undertake the same, in its capacity as trustee of the state.

II

STIMULATION OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

It is important that interest should be aroused in the rising generation of our state, concerning the deeds of Wisconsin troops during the war for the preservation of the Union. A careful study of that great struggle would stimulate their love of country, and their appreciation of those splendid self-sacrifices for the nation which were made by the state's volunteers. It has been seen that the state has in its possession rich collections of original material which could through publication be made more accessible to students of this special period of its history. If provision should also be made by the state for printing carefully-selected and meritorious essays and papers upon Wisconsin's part in the war, it is to be hoped that private bounty might afford the necessary means for assisting students who have particular ability or qualifications for such investigation.

The same admirable spirit that induces our state to mark the battlefields whereon Wisconsin troops achieved honor, may well be extended to this proposed movement for encouraging our youth, through historical reading and investigation, to realize

and vitalize Wisconsin's important work in the civil war, and thereby awaken within them that same degree of civic patriotism which led their forebears to undertake the task and endure the sacrifices of the long and bitter struggle for national unity.

III.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

Many of the active participants in the war are still among us. Each of them has personal knowledge of at least some battles, campaigns, or other phases of life and work in the Union army. This large fund of personal recollections, which is drawn upon so freely at reminiscent "camp-fires" of the veterans, has in our state been but little utilized by students of history. It has been pointed out that much less than a half of Wisconsin's regiments have as yet found their historians. Obviously no scheme of publication by the state should fail to include such meritorious personal recollections or company or regimental histories by survivors of the war, as may be called out in the proposed movement for reviving popular interest in Wisconsin's war record.

IV.

MONOGRAPHS AND FORMAL HISTORIES

The proper outcome of existing collections of contemporary manuscript and printed sources in the State Historical Library, and in the official archives of the state, supplemented by special studies of students in our schools and colleges, the personal recollections of survivors, and company and regimental histories, would be the preparation of monographs and formal histories by persons trained to and skilled in historical research. So far as is consonant with the proper functions of the state, finished works of this character should, when particularly worthy, receive encouragement.

There are many features of Wisconsin's participation in the civil war, outside of battles and campaigns, that deserve expert monographic treatment, and original material for which would seem to be already fairly abundant. The financial aid rendered

by the commonwealth, the methods of raising the first levies and transforming militia companies into active-service volunteers, the organization and history of the commissary, medical, and transportation departments, the chaplain service, the conduct of state camps, sanitary and relief committees—each of these, and many other interests, are fit subjects for skilled historical treatment. Not until these special phases of the subject have been adequately studied, can the real history be written of Wisconsin's share in the great war.

The members of your commission are of the opinion that a great public service of enduring influence for good can be exercised by the state in undertaking in a careful and judicious manner the work herein outlined.

Upon the presentation of this report, the powers of the present commission cease by limitation. It remains for the legislature to take such further action in the premises as may in its judgment seem advisable.

February 5, 1907.

Respectfully submitted.

CHARLES E. ESTABROOK,
Chairman.
J. O. DAVIDSON.
FREDERICK J. TURNER.
REUBEN G. THWAITES,
HENRY E. LEGLER,
Secretary.

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